N°7

The Reaſonableneſs and Uſes of commemorating King CHARLES's *Martyrdom.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Univerſity of *OXFORD,*

At St. *MARY*'s,

On *Tueſday, January* 30. 1753.

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2 Chron. XXXV. 25.

And Jeremiah *lamented for* Joſiah, *and all the Singing-men and all the Singing-women ſpake of* Joſiah *in their Lamentations to this Day, and made them an Ordinance in* Iſrael: —

THERE is no Perſon We read of in ſacred Hiſtory, whoſe Death occaſion'd ſo univerſal and laſting a Sorrow, as that of the Prince, whoſe funeral Obſequies are here recorded. The great Prophet *Jeremiah* was ſo affected with it, that we find he made it, not leſs than the Captivity, the particular Subject of his Lamentation. And though he beſt knew the Value of this Prince, and what Times of Confuſion, to true Religion and his Country, were now likely to enſue, yet was he by no Means ſingular in his Grief on this Occaſion. The whole Houſe of *Iſrael* is repreſented as ſharing with him therein; and to a Degree ſo great and uncommon, that it was u-

ſual afterwards to deſcribe any grievous Mourning by comparing it to this in the Valley of *Megiddon*,[a] where *Joſiah* was ſlain. Nor was this any ſhort tranſient Guſt of Paſſion, ſuch as often ariſes when Men are ſuddenly cut off in the Vigour of Life and Height of their Purſuits: His Fall impreſſed a deep and laſting Concern on the Minds of His People; and was judged of ſuch fatal Conſequence to their Happineſs, that it ever afterwards became the Subject of annual Commemoration.

It is to ſolemnize an Event of this Kind, that We are now, in the Preſence of Almighty God, aſſembled. How far our Caſe may reſemble this of the choſen People, will beſt appear from a Conſideration of the Perſons and Circumſtances, which occaſion'd the reſpective Obſervances. Now the Endowments, for which *Joſiah* ſeems to have been more particularly eminent, were, a *Heart tender*[b] and well diſpoſed; a Mind deeply imprinted with an awful Senſe of the Divine Being; an unwearied Zeal to reſtore, throughout his Dominions, the eſtabliſhed Religion of his Country, which was then miſerably defaced; and an exact Conformity to the Duties of it in his own Perſon, *according to that which was written in the Law of Moſes*. Theſe were the diſtin-

a Zechariah 12. 11. b 2 Chron. 24. 27.

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guiſhing Virtues of this excellent Prince: In which he ſeems to have been ſo nearly reſembled by the Perſon We this Day commemorate, allowing for the different Diſpenſations of Religion under which they lived, that I am perſuaded You are before-hand with me in drawing the Compariſon. Inſtead therefore of attempting his Character, which wou'd only be repeating the above-mention'd Virtues, ſuffer me only farther to add, that the Similitude, in ſome Meaſure, reached even to the Deaths of theſe two Worthies: Both of them being cut off in the Vigour of their Age; both brought to violent and untimely Ends; with this Difference only, that the Firſt was ſlain in Battel with a foreign Enemy, the Laſt was murder'd by the Hands of his own Subjects: A Circumſtance which renders the Duty of an annual Lamentation on our Part the more incumbent. The ſucceeding Times to both theſe Events were ſo full of Diſtraction and Miſery, that it is not eaſy to determine which of the two Nations ſuſtain'd the greater Loſs.

Since then We have the Example of GOD's People for our Guide, in a Caſe, at leaſt, equally worthy of our devout Humiliation, it may ſeem ſtrange that it ſhou'd not always have met with a proportionable Regard. We ſay Nothing

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of thoſe mighty Alleviations and Softnings where-with the Sin of this Day has been frequently repreſented. Theſe may be owing to Length of Time, which is apt to cool our juſteſt Reſentments. But then with what Mockery and Rudeneſs has this Solemnity been treated by ſome? How has the total Diſcontinuance of it been inſiſted on by others? And by how many the pious Prince, whoſe Sufferings gave Birth to it, through the moſt unaccountable Policy, been baſely traduced and vilify'd? Such faſhionable Clamours are, not only impious in themſelves, but Inſults on that Government, which from the Fitneſs of this Solemnity, wiſely calls us to the annual Performance of it.

In Order therefore to ſilence theſe licentious Tongues; and to beget in us a due Serioufneſs and Contrition of Heart on this Occaſion; and above all, to remind us of the great Duty of Subjection to Government; let us conſider,

I. *Firſt*, the Reaſons We have to diſtinguiſh this Day with public Faſtings and Humiliation.

II. *Secondly*, the Advantages which may accrue to us from appropriating it to theſe ſacred Purpoſes.

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With Regard then to the Reaſons We have to diſtinguiſh this Day with public Faſtings and Humiliation: Theſe are of three Kinds, as they reſpect the Perſon ſuffering; the Loſs ſuſtained by the Community in His Death; and the Guilt which this, and the Crimes relative to it, brought upon the Nation.

And firſt in Reſpect to the Perſon ſuffering: Whether indeed the Honours, inſtituted to the Memories of good Men, ever come within the Reach of their Knowledge in a future State, is a Point which Revelation hath no where determined. Doubtleſs Heaven is ſufficiently provided with Joys to render their Happineſs compleat, without referring them for any Part of it to a Review of what paſſes here. Otherwiſe one might imagine, in Regard more eſpecially to Perſons who had met with cruel Treatment in the World, that to ſee Prejudices removed, Men's Judgements rectified, their own Characters cleared, and their Memories now held in public Veneration and Eſteem, might not improperly conſtitute ſome Part of the Reward allotted to them for their former Sufferings. And if any Thing of this Kind cou'd be ſuppoſed to adminiſter to the Felicity of departed Souls, ſurely our late unhappy Sovereign, from the Hardſhips he underwent in his ſtormy Paſſage thro' the

the World, is intitled, above all others, to whatever Amends in this Way Poſterity can make him.

But be this as it will, mere Sentiments of Humanity ſhould incline us to pay this Tribute of Tears to his Memory. Hiſtory itſelf does not ſet before us an Object more deſerving of our Pity and Commiſeration, Him only excepted, who was emphatically ſtiled *a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief.* The Perſonal Hardſhips he endured, though ſuch as rarely fall to the Lot of Kings, were the leaſt Part of his Sufferings. The cruel Oppoſition of Enemies, the Deſertion of Friends, the perpetual Strifes among his Adherents, without any Reverence for His Authority or Preſence, and the Shame to find himſelf every where ſo ill obeyed, were Misfortunes that ſat much heavier upon his Mind. At the ſame Time, how grievouſly were his beſt Actions miſrepreſented? What heavy Loads of Obloquy were thrown upon Him? How induſtriouſly was He render'd the Object of public Hatred and Contempt? Beſides the Anguiſh he daily felt for the Miſeries of his deluded People. What a ſtrange Falling ſhort was this of his juſt Expectations? He had begun his Reign with great Advantages of Nature and Learning, and with the nobleſt Intentions to render

render his Kingdoms flouriſhing and happy, beyond the Example of former Times. With what bitter Affliction then muſt it have pierced him to find, that with the honeſteſt Heart and kindeſt Affections for his People, He ſhould yet, by an unaccountable Fatality, be leſs depended on, leſs reverenced, and leſs obeyed, than the worſt and weakeſt of his Predeceſſors?

As to His being driven from his Throne; bereft of his domeſtic Comforts, in which no Man took greater Satisfaction; the continual Decline of His Affairs; and the ignominious Sufferings he was reduced to at laſt; they are Circumſtances too melancholy to bear a particular Conſideration.

Let us therefore only farther obſerve, that as his Diſtreſſes were great in themſelves, ſo they wanted Nothing in their Cauſe to render them affecting? When Sufferings, though unjuſt, are ſubmitted to only as a Means to procure to *ourſelves* ſome private Advantage, Standers-by can look on them with the greater Indifference. But when they are undergone with a generous Deſign to promote the Good of the Public, or to prevent its Ruin, they have every imaginable Claim to our unfeigned Commiſeration. It is in this Light We ought to view the Sufferings of the royal Martyr; whoſe own Times, notwith-

ſtanding the unreaſonable Men He had to deal with, might perhaps have been made tolerably eaſy by a Compliance with their exorbitant Demands. But to guard the Conſtitution, in Church and State, was eſteem'd a Truſt of too great Importance to the Public, to the Peace of his own Mind, and to the Intereſts of thoſe who ſhou'd inherit after Him, to be bartered away for the trifling Conſideration of a little private Eaſe.

The Truth is, He conſidered his People as in a temporary State of Infatuation and Madneſs, out of which they would e're long recover and return to a ſounder Mind; and that though He himſelf might periſh by not giving Way to their Fury, Poſterity however would reap the Benefit of his Steadineſs, and at length find their Way out of the preſent Confuſion. It muſt ever therefore be acknowledged as a ſignal Inſtance of GOD's Goodneſs, that, when He ſaw fit to puniſh the Nation with a Spirit of Frenzy and Diſtraction, he ſhould yet in his merciful Severity let it looſe at ſo ſeaſonable Time. Under any Monarch leſs provident for the Welfare of his People, it muſt, after ruining the Conſtitution, have procured perpetual Eſtabliſhment by Law to ſuch other Scheme of Government, as Men of the moſt libertine Principles ſhould have thought fit to impoſe. Inſtead then of repreſenting this Prince as

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an Enemy to his Country, We ſhould eſteem his unſhaken Firmneſs and Patience in Adverſity, as the chief Means, under Providence, of its Laws not being finally deſtroy'd. Such Sufferings therefore, and in ſuch a Cauſe, will ever merit our deepeſt Concern, as well as moſt grateful Remembrance.

But however, though perſecuted Innocence be always a fit Object of Pity, yet our Sorrow on this Occaſion, were We to look no farther than the Sufferings of the Martyr, might admit of great Alleviations. The laſting Honour done to himſelf and to Chriſtianity by the heroic Manner in which he endured them, and the Way they opened Him to a more early and glorious Immortality, would, in the midſt of Trouble, be Matter of Comfort and joyful Remembrance to us. But the Misfortune was, His Gains in this Reſpect were the Publick's Loſs; and prevented much probable Good to the Nation as well as introduced much real Evil. In which View the cool Suggeſtions of *Reaſon*, no leſs than the tender Workings of *Nature*, will juſtifie our Grief on this Occaſion.

Let us therefore conſider, in the *next* Place, what apparent Damage the Community ſuſtained by the untimely Death of this Monarch. We cannot indeed engage for the future good Diſpo-

ſitions of any Man; much leſs warrant the Succeſs of his Deſigns. But in Regard to the Prince now under Conſideration, if We may judge from his Maturity of Years, and ſettled Habits of Virtue; from the admirable Abilities, and extenſive Views, of Perſons in higheſt Truſt under Him; or from the noble Beginnings which had already been made; the Nation would have owed great Improvements to His Reign, had it been protracted to its natural Length and ſubject only to ordinary Occurrences.

A Conſideration of Particulars will beſt enable us to judge concerning the Reaſonableneſs of theſe Expectations. With Reſpect therefore to, what will always be uppermoſt in the Thoughts of a good Man, the Advancement of true Religion. There were many Ingredients in the Character of this Prince, which might render him particularly to be depended on for His kindeſt Aſſiſtance in this Affair. He had, by the natural Bent of his Genius, the Converſation of the Times, and the Importance of the Subject, been led into an early and familiar Acquaintance with the Doctrines of our Church. Time and long Experience of Her Excellency had ripen'd this into an habitual Fondneſs and Veneration for Her, and produced in him Sentiments of the moſt filial Tenderneſs and Affection. This made

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him truly deſirous of extending Her Intereſts, and of winning over All to a Profeſſion of the wholſom Doctrines which She preſcribed. And though We cannot hope that He could ever have brought his People, in ſo obſtinate and refractory an Age, to that Uniformity of Worſhip, which is always ſo greatly to be wiſhed; yet ſurely much Good might have been done in this Reſpect, had not his Authority been diminiſhed and at Length wholly taken away. At leaſt, the Church would have been kept ſafe from Annoyance, and thoſe Swarms of Sectaries repreſſed, which afterwards aroſe in ſuch Numbers to deſtroy it, and have ever ſince hung over it, like a Cloud, ready at the leaſt Encouragement to ſettle upon it and devour it.

But however He might have ſucceeded here, We may pronounce with greater Certainty concerning the good Effects of His Reign on the practical Religion and Morals of his People. The bare Example of a good King will ſpread its Influence no inconſiderable Way. But when he takes the farther Care to countenance only the Pretenſions of worthy Men, his Sphere of doing Good will be greatly enlarged, and reach through them to their remoteſt Dependents in a long Subordination. This Rule was viſibly attended to in the Conduct of this excellent Prince.

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He did not readily admit any into Places of Truſt or nearer Acceſs to His Perſon, that were not Men of ſober and unblemiſhed Lives. To appear frequently and join with Him in the public Offices of the Church, was known to be agreeable to Him, and underſtood as a previous Step to his Favour. And the affectionate Regard he paid to Her ableſt Profeſſors, making them his ever welcome Companions and truly ſpiritual Guides, brought Religion into great Credit and Eſteem. Not to mention the ſtrict Inquiry he cauſed to be made into Men's Lives, or the Puniſhment which was ſure to be inflicted on ſcandalous Wickedneſs whereever it was found. In ſhort the Promotion of Piety and Virtue ſeems to have been always uppermoſt in his Thoughts; towards which no reaſonable Inducements were wanting, that could be ſuggeſted by a vigilant and wiſe King.

The Succeſs of theſe Endeavours were viſibly ſeen in the trying Times that followed. For to them, We have Reaſon to believe, were in a good Meaſure owing thoſe many excellent and brave Men, who out of mere Motives of Duty to their Prince, and Love of the eſtabliſhed Religion and Laws, underwent the laſt Extremities. At leaſt, Few, I am perſuaded, of equal Fortune and Birth, would have hazarded their *All*,

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in any Times wherein ſuch worthy Principles were leſs faſhionable. Their Sufferings may be conſidered therefore, as ſo many Teſtimonies of the Benefit they had reaped, from the pious Labours and Example of their Sovereign. And if the Influence was not general, it was becauſe the Nation at that Time was far gone in Vice, and, from the Miſts of Prejudice induſtriouſly raiſed, beheld the King and his Court through the groſſeſt Medium. What then might have been expected, had Providence, in Mercy to our Land, ſuffered him thus to go on through a long Courſe of Years, exhibiting in himſelf a Pattern of every Chriſtian Virtue; making the Qualifications of Probity and Religion the great Recommendations to Favour; and laying Vice and Intemperance under manifeſt Diſgrace? It muſt at Length have overcome every Prejudice, and have given ſuch Eſtabliſhment to Piety, as Time, with all our Proneneſs to Sin, could not readily have deſtroy'd. What a Loſs therefore his Death was to us as a People, every one will judge, who conſiders how cloſely the Bleſſings of Providence are connected with a national Piety.

To theſe weighty Conſiderations I may here add, what would be eſteemed no ſmall Misfortune, if it ſtood alone, namely, the Interruption given by this Event to the uſeful and ornamental

mental Arts of a Nation. We read of no Times wherein theſe were in a fairer Way of being brought to Perfection, than during the quiet Part of this Reign, under a Prince who was admirably ſkilled in Affairs of this kind, and diſtinguiſhed for his Patronage and Encouragement of Arts, above all his Predeceſſors in the Throne. This Circumſtance, though not unworthy the Remembrance of a Nation jealous of its Glory in this Reſpect, will however always be reflected on, with peculiar Regret, by Societies of Men ſet apart for the Study and Improvement of liberal Knowledge. And with Regard to ourſelves; that intire Confidence He repoſed in theſe Seats of Learning; that ſafe Retreat they afforded him in Times of Danger; and that generous Aſſiſtance He received from them in his utmoſt Need, beſides endearing his Memory, render us ſtill deeper Sharers in the general Loſs; as Places ſo eminently loyal and ſerviceable could not, upon a Recovery of His former Eſtate, but have received diſtinguiſhed Marks of His Favour.

Theſe are ſome of the Advantages loſt to our Country by the Murder of this Prince. To which if We ſhould add the immediate Judgements it brought upon the Kingdom during the Uſurpation that followed, or trace the more diſtant Evils proceeding naturally from it, the Account would be greatly inflamed. But

But I rather haſten to what was *laſt* to be conſidered under this Head, and *moſt* deſerves our unfeigned Contrition, to wit, the Guilt which this foul Act, with the other Crimes relative thereto, brought upon the Nation.

This will appear if We conſider that in the New Teſtament, which ought to be the Rule of our Conduct civil as well as religious, there is no Duty injoined more ſtrongly or with fewer Limitations, than that of Submiſſion to Governours. The Texts to this Purpoſe are ſo interwoven into the Offices of the Day, and withal ſo well known from the frequent Diſputes which have ariſen about the Doctrine of Obedience, that it would be needleſs here to repeat them. Let it therefore ſuffice to obſerve, that not a Precept was laid down touching this Duty, to which the Lives of its Authors were not ſtrictly conformable. Thus it is remarked of our Bleſſed LORD, that He did many Things, to which he was not otherwiſe bound, purely to expreſs his Regard for the civil Magiſtrate. His Diſciples too, where they met with Oppoſition from the Great, did not, under a Pretence that their's was the Cauſe of GOD, endeavour to taint the Fidelity or alienate the Affections of the People from their lawful Governours. Their Practice, on the contrary, was to teach their Followers

Obedience in general, and leave *them*, from the Laws and Conſtitution of their Country, to determine, to whom, and in what Meaſure, that Obedience was due: Notwithſtanding they lived under the moſt lawleſs and bloody Set of Tyrants We read of in Hiſtory.

But the Guilt of this Day will appear in Colours more glaring and offenſive, if We ſet forth, in Oppoſition to Obedience, the Heinouſneſs of Rebellion in *general*, and the Aggravations with which *this* in *particular* was attended. Now the Crime of Rebellion, taken in all its Circumſtances, is perhaps one of the blackeſt that it is poſſible for Man to commit. Other Sins conſiſt in violating GOD's Commands; but this carries with it the additional heightening Circumſtance of inſulting His Perſon. For Kings He declares to be his Vice-gerents and Repreſentatives on Earth. They ſtand in the ſame kind of Subordination to Him, as Ambaſſadours do to their reſpective Sovereigns; and therefore any Attacks made upon them will be conſidered as equally offered to Himſelf.

And if We conſider this Act in a moral View, and as it relates only to the Perſons that are guilty of it, Nothing can be more ungrateful and infamous. It is flying in the Face of public Authority; an open Aſſault upon what yields the ſureſt

ſureſt Protection to ourſelves, and to every other dear and valuable Property. It is violating the Engagements We have made to a Government for our quiet and dutiful Behaviour; the more ſolemn and binding theſe are, the baſer the Example of Treachery and Perfidiouſneſs.

The Effects of this Crime on the Public do moreover greatly heighten its Malignity. Government was inſtituted for the Benefit, the Protection, and the Support of the whole Community. But Rebellion utterly defeats theſe Ends. For what Deſigns can be ſet on Foot for the Honour or Advantage of a Nation, when itſelf is ready to be devoured by inteſtine Flames? What Protection can a Government afford its Subjects againſt a foreign Enemy, whilſt it has a powerful Faction up in Arms to contend with at Home? Or what Succour to Men in their private Capacity, in Caſe of any potent Oppreſſor, when the Courſe of Juſtice is ſtopped, or the Force of it naturally turned another Way? Nay when probably the very Notions of Right and Wrong are loſt in the Madneſs of Party; and every Man is rated, not according to his Virtues or Vices, but the political Principles he hath eſpouſed. This is the very Seaſon for the artful Villain to perpetrate his Crimes in with Impunity: For then, like a Man ſituated on

the Borders of two contending States, if he has committed any Frauds or Depredations on one Side, he has the other ready at Hand to betake himſelf to for Refuge.

But Rebellion never wears ſo terrifying an Aſpect, as when it appears in all the Horrours and Confuſion of a civil War. Its Progreſs through a Kingdom is then marked with Nothing but Rapine and Deſolation, Sacrilege and Blood: not to mention the thouſand Fears and Apprehenſions of a People at ſuch a Time; nor the Tears of good Men ſhed over their bleeding Country. In ſhort, War under any Form is dreadful; but moſt particularly ſo when it rages among Fellow-citizens. In other Conteſts of this Kind there is ſomething of Generoſity and mutual Compaſſion ſhewn, as the Parties are not ſet on by Malice. But civil Wars, like Enmities between Friends or Relations, have in them a deep Mixture of perſonal Spite, and are therefore generally carried on with the moſt determined Rancour and Cruelty.

Such then is the heinous Nature of Rebellion in general. And if We deſcend to that in particular, which gave Occaſion to the preſent Solemnity, we ſhall find, that beſides the Guilt which naturally adheres to this Crime, it was loaded with many additional and aggravating Circumſtances. Whe-

Whether an Inſurrection againſt a Prince can on *any* Account be lawful, is a Queſtion that hath been greatly diſputed. Though poſſibly Caſes might be put, of Oppreſſion, of Cruelty, and of abſolute Tyranny over the Properties, the Religion, and the Lives of Subjects, which human Nature could not endure, but would be rouſed, by a Kind of natural Inſtinct, to ſhake off the preſent Incumbrance. To ſay Men are bound to ſit ſtill under ſuch a Load, would be eſtabliſhing an unequal Law againſt themſelves, and rendering free Subjects ever liable to change their Condition for that of Slavery, without leaving them any Means to prevent it. At ſuch Junctures therefore if ſome bolder Steps ſhould be taken to reſcue themſelves, the Neceſſity of the Times might ſeem to excuſe them. But then, as on one Hand Liberty might be loſt, if to reſiſt was in no Caſe allowable; ſo on the other, Government could not ſubſiſt, if Men might rebel as oft as they were diſſatisfied. Nothing therefore leſs than the greateſt Evils felt, or reaſonably apprehended, can afford any Plea to juſtify a forcible Oppoſition.

Taking the Matter then no higher than the Principles of mere human Policy, what muſt we think of thoſe Men who kindled the Rebellion of which We are ſpeaking? What Provocations had

had they to introduce an Evil, which, in moſt poſſible Caſes, muſt create greater Miſchiefs, than any it can pretend to rectify or prevent? The only Motives we know of that can give Colour to ſuch deſperate Undertakings, are the Ruin of Religion, the Subverſion of the Laws, or the general Sufferings of a People. But was the Wickedneſs of their Attempts ſo much as *alleviated* by all or by one of theſe Conſiderations? With Regard to *Religion*, the King gave the laſt Proofs of his being zealouſly attached to it, as by Law eſtabliſhed in the Church of *England:* Which I doubt not, with his Enemies, was his greateſt Crime. It may be indeed He did not give that Diſcountenance to thoſe of the *Romiſh* Communion, which ſome might deſire. But a well-natured Man would be inclined to pity his Situation, rather than blame his Conduct in this particular. The neareſt and deareſt Relation he had in the World was unhappily of this Perſuaſion, whoſe Importunities in their Favour could not therefore be wholly neglected. The Papiſts ſaw and compaſſionated his Diſtreſs; and the Straits his Enemies reduced him to, at once provoked and obliged him to accept of their Service: which he might ſurely make uſe of with as little Offence as his rebellious Subjects were known to do. But that He favoured

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their Tenets, or deſigned to make the Religion bend to them, which he had been bred up in and ſworn to defend, is as little true, as it is at this Day, by the Generality, little believed. However His Enemies knew, that an Opinion of this would ſet the Nation on a Flame; which was Foundation enough for them to ſpread it with Induſtry.

The Charge againſt him on the Head of *civil Affairs*, was not perhaps ſo altogether groundleſs. That here ſome undue Stretches of Power were attempted, impartial Men will not be forward to deny. Yet *they* will be inclined to judge of theſe, not by the regal Authority under ſubſequent Limitations; which would be like trying a Man by the Laws of one Kingdom, who was only ſubject to thoſe of another: but by the Prerogative as it then ſtood, when the ſuppoſed Exceſſes were committed. In this View of Things his Conduct will appear leſs worthy of Reproach. Some of thoſe Steps which occaſioned the loudeſt Complaints, were ſuch, as Perſons beſt ſkilled in the Laws aſſured him were, not only allowable from the Neceſſity of his Affairs, but legal; they were in Fact ſuch as the moſt admired of his Predeceſſors had taken; and ſuch as would have been little regarded in a leſs factious and turbulent Age. But be this as

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it will, his Enemies had no Occaſion to proceed farther than to the known and ordinary Methods of Oppoſition. For not a Grievance was complained of but what the King was moſt ready and willing to redreſs, upon a proper Repreſentation, and, with all the Tenderneſs of a Father, to content his People, even beyond their reaſonable Deſires; which is well known to have been his Ruin. So much Goodneſs, on their own Principles, left them not even a ſpecious Pretence for continuing the Troubles. But it was one great Myſtery of thoſe Times, and added not a little to their Iniquity, that Grievances, though redreſſed and owned to be ſo, were yet never ſuffered to be forgotten. Artful Men ſtill kept poiſoning the Minds of the People with a Remembrance of them, and by that Means rendered them as ſerviceable to the Purpoſes of Faction and Rage, as if really Nothing had been done by Way of Reparation for them.

It was a farther Aggravation of this Crime, that the *Condition of the State* afforded no Provocations to it. Sometimes it has happened that the Diſtreſſes brought upon a People by Famine, by War, or other Providential Evils, have cauſed ſudden Inſurrections againſt a Prince, notwithſtanding they were Calamities, which he had no Power either to prevent or remedy. Thus *Moſes* com-

complains, that when the People were periſhing with Thirſt, *They were almoſt ready to ſtone him.*[a] And though ſuch deſperate Efforts are not to be excuſed, yet from the violent Workings of human Nature under exquiſite Diſtreſs, we are inclined to make favourable Allowances for them. But were theſe Diſturbers of our Quiet provided with the leaſt Plea of this Kind to offer in behalf of their Outrages? The Nation, as We learn from the moſt authentic Accounts, had never enjoy'd greater Peace or Plenty, or been in all Points more flouriſhing, than before this fatal Period. Beſides, what might have added a Reliſh to theſe Bleſſings, and certainly made the Folly of parting with them greater, was, that they were vouchſafed to us at a Time, when all the neighbouring Kingdoms were involved in War, and our own, by large Acceſſions of Commerce, reaped the Benefit of their Diſſenſions. Every ſecular Intereſt therefore, as well as Duty, did then more particularly recommend the Cultivation of Peace among ourſelves.

Accordingly, we may obſerve, this was not a Rebellion of the People's own chooſing. The Defection at firſt took its Riſe from a Few: and ſo intirely ſatisfied were the Generality with their King and ancient Conſtitution, that it could ne-

a Exodus 17. 4.

ver have been brought to any Head, but by Uſe of the baſeſt Means. To this End therefore bold Scandals, imaginary Fears, and falſe Hopes were every where plentifully ſown. Some were allured by Flattery, ſome over-awed by Threatenings, many over-reached by Forgeries, and almoſt all impoſed on by the prevailing Sin of thoſe Times, deep Diſſimulation. The Truth is, every Villany was neceſſary, and therefore no one left unpractiſed, to ſeduce an innocent Multitude into Rebellion: which gave great additional Horrours to a Crime in itſelf ſufficiently black and deteſtable.

As to the crying Sins which followed, after the Defection by theſe Artifices became univerſal, I have no Inclination here to diſplay them. This would only be diſcloſing ſuch Scenes of Slaughter and Blood, as ought, for the Honour of our Country, to be for ever hid from human View. Let it therefore ſuffice in general to obſerve, that no Cruelty was omitted, during the Courſe of a long civil War, which either ſullen Revenge, or obſtinate, religious, Sourneſs could inſpire.

It is well known what all this terminated in at laſt; the Ruin of our Church, the Subverſion of the State, and the public Murder of a Prince in cold Blood, who for Piety, Temperance, Humility,

mility, and whatever other Virtues do beſt adorn a Chriſtian, had no Superior.

And now, when theſe Men, by the moſt iniquitous Steps, had aſcended to the Height of Power, did they employ it more to the Subject's Advantage, than thoſe had done from whom it was wreſted? this, though it could not have ſanctified their Methods of attaining that Eminence, might however have yielded ſome Satisfaction. But alas! it happen'd here, as it ever will in Caſes of the like Nature, that Power ill gotten was worſe uſed. Thoſe very Men, who had been ſo long calling out for Liberty, became now the moſt violent Oppreſſors; exacting a ſlaviſh Obedience from others in Points, where they had refuſed to pay only a dutiful Submiſſion themſelves. Thus every Grievance that had been complain'd of under a lawful Monarch, ſuch as Want of Toleration in Religion, Taxes on the Subject, Courts unknown to the Conſtitution, and the like, was impoſed with double Weight and Rigour under a baſe Uſurpation. Not to mention numberleſs Hardſhips now laid upon the People, for which the late Reign had not afforded the leaſt Shadow of Complaint. In a Word, the Nation was never more cruelly dealt with, than under its new Maſters. A Judgement it too well deſerved! But which it

had leaſt of all Reaſon to expect from the Hands of thoſe permitted to inflict it.

What ſhall We ſay then of a Rebellion, in itſelf the greateſt of Crimes, begun without Provocation, proceeding through every Act of Violence and Injuſtice, ending in the moſt daring Act of Wickedneſs, and afterwards erecting itſelf into the moſt bloody and oppreſſive Tyranny? *Shall I not viſit for theſe Things ſaith the LORD? Shall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* [a] If it be argued that *We* had no perſonal Share in the above-mentioned Crimes, and therefore ought not to be involved in the Puniſhment: Let it be remember'd that We have many Inſtances of GOD's judicial Dealings with the *Iſraelites*, from whence may beſt be learned His judicial Dealings with all other Nations, wherein this Plea was totally over-ruled. Thus in Caſes of uncertain Murder, the People, neareſt whom it was committed, were obliged to make a formal Expiation, notwithſtanding themſelves were innocent of the Crime; that ſo it might not be laid either to their or to the People of *Iſrael*'s Charge. [b] In like Manner the Blood of the *Gibeonites*, which *Saul* ſhed ſoon after his Exaltation to the Kingdom, was not puniſhed, till the long Reign of *David* was nearly expired. [c]

a Jer. 5. 29. b Deut. 21. 1, &c. c 2 Sam. 21. 1. &c.

To

To which We may add, that Vengeance againſt *Judah*, for *Manaſſeh*'s wicked Reign, was threaten'd ſo late as under that of *Joſiah*,[a] and only received its final Execution in the great Captivity. But our Saviour carries this Point ſtill higher, and declares in his laſt compaſſionate Farewel to *Jeruſalem, that all the righteous Blood ſhed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, to the Blood of Zacharias, ſhould be required of that Generation.*[b] It is well known, how minutely this Prophecy was fulfilled in the Deſtruction of their City; and what heavy Vengeance even to this Day purſues that forlorn and deſpiſed People. Such Examples therefore are ſufficient ſtill to make *us* tremble; as they convince us that lateſt Poſterity is not placed out of the Reach of the Puniſhment due to their Forefathers: eſpecially if they continue adding to the original Guilt a freſh Load of their own Sins. For which Reaſon let us proceed in the

II. *Second* and *laſt* Place to conſider the Advantages, which may accrue to us from appropriating this Day to publick Faſtings and Humiliation.

And here the *firſt* and greateſt Advantage we can propoſe to ourſelves, from a due Uſe of

a 2 Kings 23. 26, 27. b Matt. 23. 35, 36.

theſe

theſe Means, is Reſtoration to the Divine Favour. That national Sins may remain a long Time not cancelled in the Books of Heaven, the above-cited Inſtances, out of inſpired Writ, do abundantly teſtify. How our Accounts ſtand there, touching thoſe heavy Articles of Guilt we have now been enumerating, God only knows. It is true, the Nation paid dearly for the Murder of their King and Baniſhment of his Children, under the Uſurpation that followed. But nevertheleſs we have ſince had ſtrong Intimations given us, from Time to Time, that the whole Debt is not yet fully diſcharged. Witneſs that unbounded Licentiouſneſs which prevailed in one Reign; the near Approaches that were made to the Introduction of Popery and Slavery in another; the frequent Rebellions with which We have ſince been alarmed; and the Diviſions ſtill ſubſiſting among us, which have all, by the divine Appointment, ſprung from the ſame Root of Bitterneſs. What future Calamities, on this Account, Providence may yet have in Store, are only known to the ſecret Councils of Heaven. In the mean while it behoves us to uſe our beſt Endeavours to avert them, and appeaſe the divine Wrath, that ſo no Remains of his Diſpleaſure may hereafter diſcover themſelves in our future Dangers. Towards which Nothing can be

ſo effectual, as the Duties in which we are now engaged. They are the Methods wherein God himſelf hath ſignified his Pleaſure of being addreſſed for Pardon and Reconciliation. They are the Methods which Nature ſuggeſts to us, as beſt fitted to excite in the Deity the Affections of Pity and good Will towards us; and have therefore been applied by all Nations, how different ſoever in their other Parts of Worſhip, to aſſwage the divine Wrath, and to procure a Reſtoration to Favour. Accordingly many Inſtances might be produced, out of both ſacred and profane Hiſtory, to ſhew the great Succeſs attending ſuch national Humiliations. As we hope indeed that, with regard to ourſelves, theſe have proved a main Reaſon why, after the Rod has been ſo often held over us, the full Stroke of it has hitherto been never inflicted.

But the Service of this Day, is not only beſt ſuited to obtain Remiſſion of Sins paſt, but to prevent our running into the like for the future. Without ſome ſtated Commemoration of this Kind, the Facts above-mention'd muſt have ſlept in Hiſtory, been only Matter of Speculation to the Curious, and never have come to the Knowledge of Thouſands. But this annual Solemnity brings the Multitude acquainted with them; and what is more, inſpires them, from their Childhood,

hood, with the blackeſt Notions of Rebellion, and of the Crime of all thoſe, who could dip their Hands in the Blood of Kings. The Truth is, ſuch Obſervances operate by a Kind of mechanick Influence on the Minds of the Vulgar, and tend more to keep them ſteady in their Duty, than perhaps the ſtrongeſt Reaſonings would do. They can never therefore be in the true Intereſt of Government, who would lay aſide the beſt Means of preſerving alive theſe uſeful Abhorrences among the People, who muſt ever be the chief Strength of a Rebellion when or wherever it prevails.

Add to which, that the public Commemoration of this Murder affords the beſt Opportunity of inforcing the Duty of Submiſſion to Kings. Indeed Obedience to theſe is ſo eſſential to the Happineſs of a State, and withal an Office ſo incumbent on us as Chriſtians, that methinks a Day ſet a part for the Inculcation of it might not be improper, though no particular Occaſion invited us thereto. Becauſe Duties, which may be taught at all Times, are apt to be wholly neglected, unleſs ſome Time more than another be fixed and determin'd for the Inforcement of them. It is therefore a Point of the higheſt Prudence to take Advantage, as it were, of this Occurrence to admoniſh Subjects of the Obedience

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due to their Sovereign. This is like uttering Exhortations over the Dead, when the Object of Mortality is before our Eyes, and at once ſuggeſts the ſtrongeſt Arguments for a good Life, and beſt diſpoſes us to give them a ſerious and attentive Hearing.

And if this be a Remedy, in its own Nature adapted to do us Service, it could in no Age perhaps be more ſeaſonably applied. The diſſolute Principles in Religion, propagated for many Years with great Induſtry and Succeſs amongſt us, have produced, as they ever will, Notions equally looſe in Point of Government; and thereby added Numbers to the ancient Enemies of our Conſtitution. The Truth of this Obſervation is but too well evinced by conſtant Experience. We ſee the Bent of the Nation is towards Licentiouſneſs, and the Balance of Power daily inclining to the popular Side. Books of a republican Caſt find more Readers and a kinder Reception in the World than heretofore. Men's Opinions of Things are new-moulded, as it were, and the grave, wholſom, and orderly Doctrines of our Fathers quite out of Faſhion and Date amongſt us. Hence that ſtrange and unhappy Forwardneſs in the preſent Age to break through all thoſe Fences and Incloſures, by which proper Subordinations are maintained.

Hence we ſee Men getting every Day nearer to a Level with one another, and growing more familiar and bold with ſacred Characters. So that the preſent Tranquillity is perhaps rather owing, under Providence, to the temperate Uſe of Power in our Superiors, than to any religious Principle of Obedience in the People themſelves.

Whilſt therefore the turbulent Spirit of former Times remains, or rather gains ground, it will behove us to keep in Remembrance the Sin of this Day, as the beſt Means to allay and repreſs it, by teaching us, from Example, where all republican Schemes, all Attempts to new model our Government would probably end. This indeed was dear-bought Experience at firſt; but from which later Times have reaped no trivial Advantage. It has furniſhed them with a ready Argument, on all Occaſions, againſt Innovators in Church or State; and taught us in what Hands alone Power may ſafely be truſted: a Point of Knowledge which perhaps hath many Times ſince been the Saving of our Conſtitution.

Furthermore, this Solemnity may be of Uſe to us, not only as Subjects, but as Citizens and Members of the ſame Community. We cannot but obſerve, in the Courſe of our Meditations on this Day, what amazing Revolutions a few artful

ful Men could bring about, when once Parties were formed, and the Hearts of Fellow-citizens thoroughly enraged againſt one another. The Multitude then was at the Devotion of their Leaders, to engage in their moſt bloody Enterpriſes, to conquer or die for them, without having one real Intereſt at Stake of their own. An excellent Leſſon this, to warn us of the Danger of fomenting Diviſions! And therefore a Leſſon above all others, in which it behoves the People of this Land to be well inſtructed: ſince not a War hath been carried on in our Nation for near ſeven hundred Years, but what aroſe out of its own Bowels. A Remark that perhaps can hardly be made of any other Kingdom. And yet, during that Space, as many bloody Battles have been fought in this Iſland, as in Countries moſt expoſed to the Invaſions and Inſults of Enemies. Which is but too ſhameful a Proof of that bold and factious Diſpoſition, for which we have been deſcribed, by our Neighbours, as all along famous. And were we to conſider our preſent Diviſions, and the little Good Will Men ſeem to bear one another, I fear, there would be little Reaſon to boaſt of our Tempers being changed. Yet at the ſame Time, to our Honour be it ſpoken, in other Reſpects, where Party is out of the Caſe, a Want of Charity and

kind Diſpoſitions is by no Means the Fault of this Nation. How nearly then does it concern us to practiſe every Method to correct this our Proneneſs to civil Rage; it being evidently *the Sin, which*, conſidered as a People, *doth moſt eaſily beſet us?*

Laſtly, this Day will fall ſhort of its proper Effect, unleſs it teach the great Movers and Heads of Sedition to be cautious, for their *own* Sakes, how they throw Affairs into Confuſion. When once the Bands of Government are diſſolved, and Men are all as it were let looſe together, Leaders themſelves can be little ſecure of maintaining their Stations. At ſuch Times Men of more violent Deſigns are continually ſpringing up and advancing forward in the Croud; who make no Conſcience of thruſting aſide thoſe, that before had taught themſelves to rebel. One cannot without admiring the juſt Diſpenſations of Providence obſerve, how fully this was exemplified in the chief Actors in the great Rebellion. Not a Set of Men engaged in this bloody Deſign, but what in Time was overtopped by others who had ſprung up under them; and owed all their Growth to the Shelter and Protection which thoſe had afforded them. Thus the Nobility, who had given Dignity and Weight to the Commons in their Attempts againſt their Sove-

Sovereign, were at Length depoſed by thoſe Commons, and by them reduced to the ordinary Level. Theſe again were inſulted, and thruſt out of Power, by the Officers they had hired to fight their Battles. And in the End the Officers themſelves were menaced and over-awed by thoſe Dregs of the People, their own Armies. So little can Conductors themſelves hope ſtill to keep foremoſt, through all the Windings and Perplexities of a civil War!

Theſe are ſome of the Leſſons, that may be learned, by Men of all Tempers and Degrees, from the inſtructive Folly of our Forefathers. — It therefore only now remains that we obſerve this reaſonable and uſeful Solemnity in ſuch Manner, as may beſt anſwer the Ends, for which it was inſtituted; the ſupplicating Pardon for Sins paſt, and the promoting in us all dutiful Obedience to our preſent Governours. Far be it from us then *to faſt for Envy and Strife*. This would be only inhancing the Guilt, of which we are now met to implore the Forgiveneſs. Rather let us, upon every Return of this Seaſon, join in our humble Addreſſes before the Throne of Grace, with all the Unanimity, and cordial Affection, which is natural to Men juſtly apprehenſive of the ſame impending Dangers:

Dangers: So ſhall this at once ſtay the Divine Wrath; and ever keep us from being [a] *as our Fathers, a ſtubborn and rebellious Generation; a Generation that ſet not their Heart aright, and whoſe Spirit was not ſteadfaſt with GOD.*

a Pſalm 78. 8.

FINIS.

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